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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a school climate improvement project conducted by the Pennsylvania State Department of Education and based on an intervention model for changing school climate. The model reflects the views of school effectiveness according to several researchers and emphasizes: (1) an integrating, ongoing problem solving attitude within the school community; (2) the presence of strong leadership; (3) high teacher expectations; (4) a collaborative approach to decision-making by school personnel; and (5) a focal point to change efforts. The paper discusses the planned change steps in the climate improvement model with emphasis on the entry, diagnosis, action planning and implementation/evaluation of the change agent. Also included is a list of general climate factors and climate determinants, as well as program, process, and material determinants that affect school climate. (JCD)

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SCHOOL CLIMATE IMPROVEMENT:

A MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CHANGE

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This paper outlines a school climate improvement project conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education with funds furnished by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. The project was designed as an intervention model for changing school climate. Although two urban schools are participating in the project, a general school climate improvement model is the project goals.

I. INTRODUCTION

Present educational programs, especially in urban school districts, often fail to meet the academic, social, emotional and vocational needs of students. This failure to provide positive environmental support in these critical areas has led to high rates of truancy, dropout, classroom disruptions, violence, vandalism, alienation and general student indifference to learning.

One area of direct intervention which has shown tremendous promise is school climate improvement. Climate improvement is an organizational approach which focuses on modifying the structures, procedures, rules, attitudes and relationships within the school community. Utilizing all of the resources of the school, a working partnership is formed among staff, students, parent, administrators and outside agencies. A school climate improvement approach does not lay the blame for a problem on a particular person or group. Rather, it seeks to create a mutual problem solving atmosphere within the entire school community so that everyone becomes part of the solution.

In many urban schools across the country, it has been shown that as the school climate becomes more positive, discipline problems, vandalism and violence subside. Attendance and academic achievement improve. The truancy and dropout rate declines. In short, school climate improvement seeks to create an environment where students feel successful, motivated and cared about.

There is a growing interest in the concept of school climate improvement as an important factor that influences student outcomes. In addition to studying the effects of curriculum and instruction, researchers are considering climate an important variable when looking at school effectiveness. In short, researchers note that climate factors have an effect on student attendance, academic achievement, behavior and delinquency (Edmonds, 1980; Rutter, 1979; Brookover, 1979). A simplified overview of recent school effectiveness literature provides empirical support for conceptualizing the school climate construct.

II. SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH

Edmonds and Fredericksen (1979)

Research has shown that no single factor or group of factors is associated with effective schools. Rather, effective schools, when measured by positive student outcomes, are the result of an integrated set of practices.

These practices include:

- Strong administrative leadership coupled with workable district policies and solid school management practices.
- An atmosphere that is "orderly without being rigid, quiet without being oppressive and generally conducive to the instructional business at hand."
- "A climate of expectation in which no student is permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement."
- A building-wide commitment to "pupil acquisition of basic school skills."
- "Some means...by which the principal and the teachers remain constantly aware of pupil progress" (Edmonds and Fredericksen, 1979).

Rutter (1979)

In 1979, a five-year London study of the effects of school on student outcomes confirmed the notion that schools can make a difference (Rutter et al., 1979). Rutter found that the school staff can develop a climate where the norms and values of the school are communicated to students through clear and consistent expectations and appropriate programs. These norms and values may, in turn, be translated into more formal statements of school policies and practices that influence student achievement. Some of the building climate environmental factors that the researchers found to be important influences on student achievement are: academic emphasis, rewards and praise, discipline and punishment, staff organization and student/teacher out-of-class interaction.

Specifically, Rutter found that successful schools:

- use effective educational strategies like praise and rewards;
- are committed to student learning;
- create a climate of high expectation for student success;
- take an ongoing collaborative problem-solving orientation toward decision making;
- respect students as responsible individuals;
- provide a pleasant physical environment.

Rutter called the compilation of all these successful school factors the "ethos" or overall climate of the school.

Brookover (1979)

Other research reinforces the notion of the importance of climate factors in producing effective schools.

Brookover has identified three aspects of school effectiveness:

1. Culture of the School

   . beliefs about students' ability to learn
   . belief about possibility of teaching students
   . expectations about students' success
   . norms of behavior considered appropriate
   . students' feelings of possibility for success

2. Instructional Practices

   . goals and objectives clarified and pursued
   . reinforcement--rewards, praise
   . time on task, engaged time
   . assessment of achievement

3. Social Structure

   . size of school
   . stratification, status system
   . curricula/groupings
   . roles recognized and approved

Brookover does not see the three aspects as separate or independent entities. Rather, the culture of the school interacts with the social structure; while instructional practices are related to both the culture and the social structure. Again, successful practices are seen as integrative rather than isolated sets of strategies which could be conveniently "plugged into" a school to make it more effective. In another sense, it is clear that the whole becomes greater than simply the sum of its parts. True effectiveness comes from the integration of many factors that produce an overall positive climate.

Madden, Lawson, Sweet (1976)

Madden and his colleagues studied twenty-one high-achieving schools paired with twenty-one low-achieving schools. The California elementary schools were matched on the basis of pupil characteristics including socio-economic status and differed only on the basis of pupil performance on standardized achievement measures. The twenty-one pairs of schools were studied in an effort to identify those institutional characteristics that seemed most responsible for the achievement differences that described the high-achieving schools and the low-achieving schools. The ten major findings are:

1. In comparison to teachers at lower-achieving schools, teachers at higher-achieving schools reported that their principals provided them with a significantly greater amount of support.

2. Teachers in higher-achieving schools were more task-oriented in their classroom approach and exhibited more evidence of applying appropriate principles of learning than did teachers in lower-achieving schools.

3. In comparison to classrooms in lower-achieving schools, classrooms in higher-achieving schools provided more evidence of student monitoring processes, student effort, happier children, and atmosphere conducive to learning.

4. In comparison to teachers at lower-achieving schools, teachers at higher-achieving schools reported that they spent relatively more time on social studies, less time on mathematics and physical education/health and about the same amount of time on reading/language development and science.

5. In contrast to teachers at lower-achieving schools, teachers at higher-achieving schools report:

   a. a larger number of adult volunteers in mathematics classes;
   b. fewer paid aides in reading; and
   c. they are more apt to use teacher aides for non-teaching tasks, such as classroom paperwork, watching children on the playground, and maintaining classroom discipline.

6. In comparison to teachers at lower-achieving schools, teachers at higher-achieving schools reported higher levels of access to "outside the classroom" materials.

7. In comparison to the teachers of lower-achieving schools, teachers at higher-achieving schools believed their faculty as a whole had more influence on educational decisions.

8. In comparison to teachers at lower-achieving schools, teachers at higher-achieving schools rated district administration higher on support services.

9. In comparison to grouping practices at lower-achieving schools, the higher-achieving schools divided classrooms into fewer groups for purposes of instruction.

10. In comparison to teachers in lower-achieving schools, teachers in higher-achieving schools reported being more satisfied with various aspects of their work.

III. DEFINITION

The research on effective schools was helpful in gaining a clearer perspective of the climate construct. From the school effectiveness research, it should be noted that school climate is more than a feeling of general satisfaction or good morale.

Rather, positive school climate is characterized by:

. The ways that schools encourage student attendance, attention, commitment and progress (Epstein, 1980);

- "everyone's focusing on school goals and student outcomes, as well as on personal relationships and salutory feelings. The ideal school climate engages everyone enthusiastically in achieving the individual and group goals at hand" (Forward by Scott D. Thomson in Kelley, 1980);

- a belief that schools <u>can</u> make a difference in what happens to people who work and study in that environment (Rutter, 1979);

- the product of assertive leadership and high teacher expectations (Brookover and Lezotte, 1979);

- a self-renewal, problem solving attitude within the school environment (Edmonds, 1980).

In a broad sense then, school climate may be described as being formed by peoples' norms, beliefs and attitudes which impact on the conditions, events and practices of the school environment. Climate not only concerns beliefs and expectations about how people get along, but also how the organization, as a whole, works towards its goals--how decisions get made, problems get solved and people get rewarded or punished within the organizational structure.

IV. PROGRAM APPROACH

The exploration of the school effectiveness research was helpful in developing an implementation model for the project. This research has provided clues to certain intervention approaches that could be built into a model to develop effective schools. The following five factors are elements for model development.

First, Rutter (1979) and Edmonds and Fredericksen (1979) in their closing discussions, mention that there is no single factor nor group of factors that could be transplanted into a school to make it effective. Rather, there is a complex integration of factors which produce an achieving school. As a result, the change model should not seek to "plug in" simple solutions like sensitivity training to change teacher expectations or implementing mastery learning to improve student achievement levels. There needs to be a planned, assessment based process of developing an on-going problem solving attitude within the school community. A corollary to this is that the change plan must be seen as a long term commitment. The development and true integration of school effectiveness factors is not a one year proposition. Change, guided by a climate improvement framework, should be a three to five year process of continued self renewal.

Second, a key ingredient in effective schools is strong leadership (Edmonds and Fredericksen, 1979; Brookover and Lezotte, 1979). The principal is instrumental in setting the tone of the school, helping to decide on instructional strategies, and organizing and distributing the school's resources. A program of organizational training on how to be an effective leader will be a mandatory part of the change model. The principal makes the difference in a school, so every effort will be made to develop support for the principals and their assistants and to increase

their effectiveness. Training will focus on what the research has identified as characteristics of effective principals, as well as, how the principal's personal strengths and personality preferences, contribute to climate leadership.

Third, Rutter (1979) and Edmonds (1980) suggest that one factor of effective schools was the degree to which faculties worked together to decide curriculum and to resolve school problems. In effective schools, faculties participated in ongoing decision making activities related to their schools. As a result, the change model has built in throughout its stages, the development of a collaborative, problem solving approach to school issues. The goal is that the faculty will become a self-renewing group capable of making positive school changes to ultimately benefit students.

Usually things have been done "to" teachers. They have been trained, sensitized, improved, modified and cajoled into various behaviors which were often fads of the times. Rarely, was a faculty asked what it wanted, what it saw as important, how it could mobilize to solve a critical issue.

The basic approach in this program is to maximize the discretionary capability of the people closest to the problem. Using a needs-based problem solving approach, the faculty (usually the people closest to the problem) will identify the problem, specify desired behavior, examine alternatives to affect desired behavior, and implement or modify the school program or policy. Assistance may be requested from parents, students, administrators, or community members. The goal is to provide the faculty with the necessary organizational skills to impact on their environment to become a self-renewing, problem solving system.

Fourth, Brookover and Lezotte (1978), Rutter (1979) and Edmonds and Fredericksen (1979) cite high teacher expectations as a crucial factor in effective schools. The question is: what strategy should be employed to promote teacher attitude change that supports a positive belief about students' ability to learn?

During the '60s and early '70s faculties were bombarded with improvement methodologies. Sensitivity training, teacher effectiveness training and a variety of other attitudinal change and skill building approaches were literally laid on faculties. The message became clear. Teachers were to blame for lack of student achievement. Teachers needed to be improved. So usually, without their consent, they were "inserviced" so that they would "learn" how to teach better. Unfortunately, programs which tried to change peoples' (parents, teachers and students) attitudes and values by preaching or telling were unsuccessful.

Students were also blamed during this period. Behavior modification programs, alternative schools and other programs sought to cast blame on the students for not succeeding or not behaving the way the school demanded. Parents and the home environment also received a share of the blame for lack of student achievement. Labeling and stigmatizing of students became a real concern for educators as students were separated and placed into special programs.

It became increasingly clear that changing teacher, parent or student expectations is not successful when negative blaming is used or when attitudinal cajoling is employed. First, blaming behavior doesn't work because people tend to get caught up in defense or in finding new groups to blame rather than finding solutions to the problems. Second, if attitudes are to be changed, a program must aim to change the conditions under which people work and the way they relate to one another. Telling people to change just does not work. The focus should be on changing the organization--its policies, procedures, rules, interaction points and expectations. By helping people change the way they behave and relate within an organization with one another, there is a strong likelihood that beliefs, values and attitudes about working and learning in school will be changed.

The model for this program supports organizational change; it does not exclude the possibility that individual students may need support and help of one sort or another, but implies that any approach which does not aim for situational change is too narrow.

Fifth, rather than using a generalized problem solving approach, it was important to add a clear sense of focus to the change effort. Although this premise is not directly supported in the research it was suggested by Edmonds (1979) that schools were effective when goals and objectives were clearly defined and everyone worked towards accomplishing them. Otherwise, a problem could become diffused or easily side-tracked. School climate was chosen as the programmatic focal point because:

- it is a major variable in school improvement literature;
- it is referred to in the school effectiveness research as being a powerful positive or negative factor;
- climate can be assessed and improvement approaches can be developed around the concept;
- the concept has gained wide acceptance among many educators;
- positive climate is a common element that a group of teachers can rally around and believe in

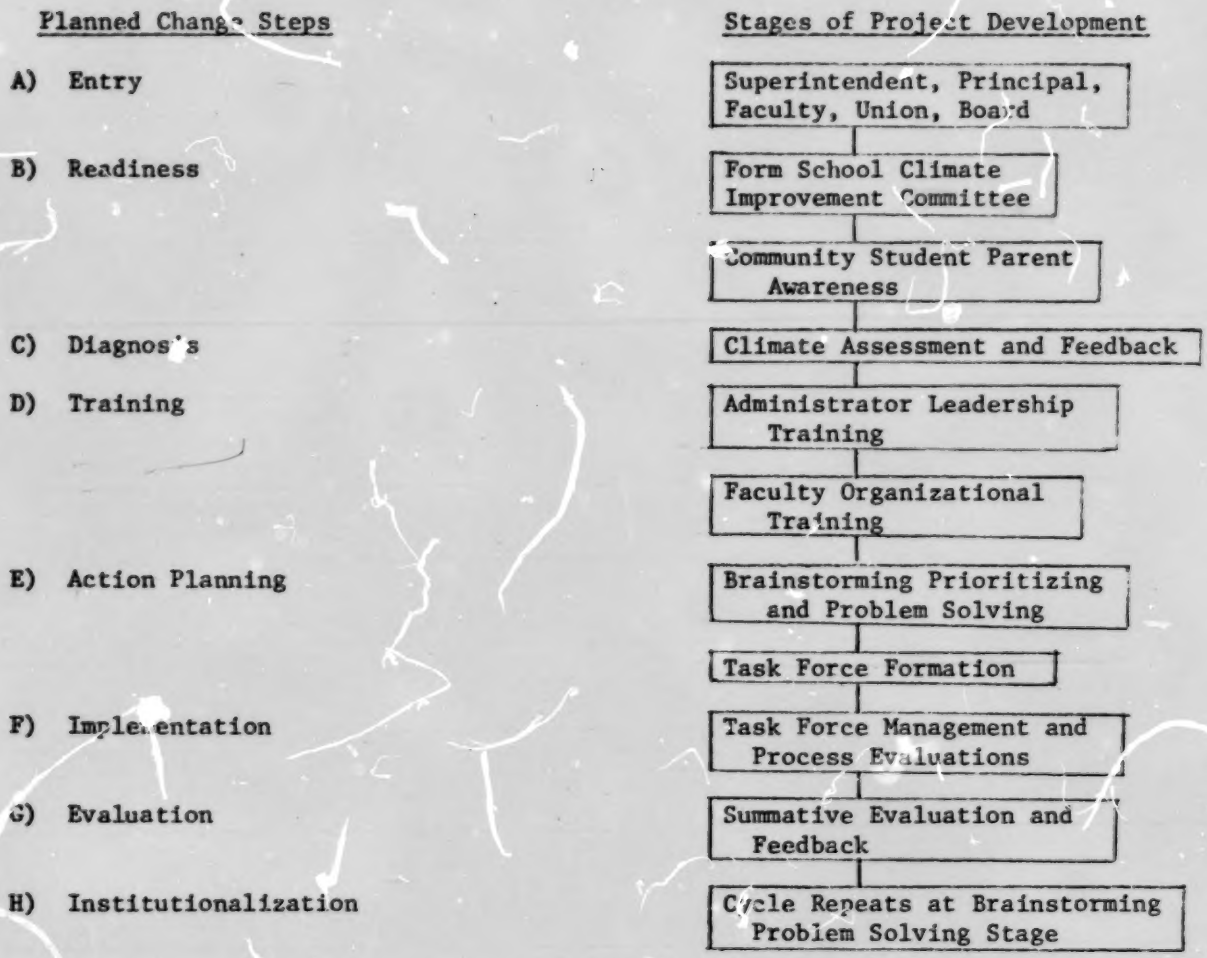
Thus, by using agreed upon climate factors, a faculty has a clear focus for developing a set of priorities and implementing a school wide action plan.

V IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This project uses the research literature on planned change to provide a framework for the school climate improvement model. The steps in the change model are outlined in Figure 1 along with the stages of project development:

Figure 1

Climate Improvement Model



A-B) Entry/Readiness

Entry into an organization is a very tenuous process for both the change agent and the client system. It is at the entry stage when a formal and psychological contract is developed (Schein, 1969). The needs, values and outcomes of both parties are explored and tentatively defined. Method of work may be agreed upon. Levels of involvement and duration may also be defined. This phase has also been referred to as scouting (Lippitt, 1958). People are feeling each other out. Many aspects of the relationship are being explored and the basic problem or problems are being more clearly defined. At this stage the program approach of the change agent may be reviewed.

For the school climate improvement project, entry takes place at the level of the superintendent of schools. Discussion proceeds from there to the central office staff, building principal, union representatives and school

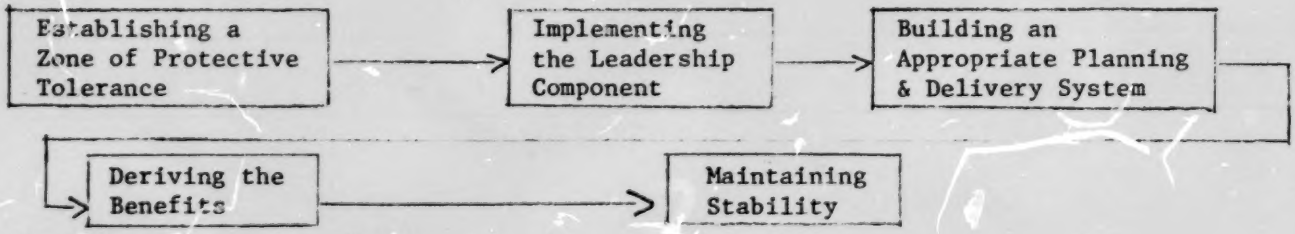
board. If there is support and commitment, both psychological and formal, from each of the above, the program outline is presented to a general meeting of the faculty in recommended schools. After this presentation, teachers are asked to vote by closed ballot to determine whether they will support the project. A 2/3 positive vote of the faculty has been decided as necessary for implementation to proceed further. A vote of less than 2/3 will result in the project proposal being withdrawn from that school. Generally, the process can only succeed with the support and agreement of the people who will do the ultimate work - the faculty. In addition, it is felt that to initiate a climate improvement process by authoritarian, administrative fiat would run counter to the goal of improved climate through shared decision making.

Readiness for change is also an important component to consider. Readiness must take into account a factor called "change cycles" before proceeding with planned change. A recent Rand study indicated that there are cycles of educational change and stability in individual school districts (and in individual schools). The timing of these cycles is affected by national trends but has a life of its own, reflecting the characteristics of district leadership, school board policies, neighborhood change, community attitudes, principals, and teachers. Typically, this cyclical flux is greatest in urban school districts, where the process of change is most likely to be unstable (Pincus and Williams, 1979).

The same study noted that strong support for change was marked by strong district leadership and community support for innovation. It identified what seem to be critical elements contributing to a school district's success or failure in implementing change. These elements, presented in Figure 2, may be portrayed as a sequential process of planned change.

Figure 2

A SEQUENCED FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING PLANNED CHANGE IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS


Establishing a Zone of Protective Tolerance
Implementing the Leadership Component
Building an Appropriate Planning & Delivery System
Deriving the Benefits
Maintaining Stability

Establishing a Zone of Protective Tolerance

Conditions in a school district must be favorable to the design and implementation of planned changes. Many districts fall short at this stage because they face crises that consume management's time and energy, such as too little money, rapidly shifting student population, or mandated racial desegregation. The major concern of such districts is for survival, not change. The level of time, money and energy to be expended must be assessed before implementing a change process (Pincus and Williams, 1979). Once these factors have been explored

with the appropriate groups, a mutual decision should be made to proceed, terminate or modify the relationship regarding the school climate improvement project.

The initial assessment is followed by the formation of a school climate improvement committee at the school building level. This committee consists of faculty, parents and students. Their charge is to provide the impetus and coordination for all climate improvement efforts in the school.

Finally, the community is made aware of the project - its goals and intended outcomes. Requests for assistance may be circulated at this point to increase involvement in the process. Meetings are held as necessary.

C) Diagnosis

Diagnosis may increase the tension/dissatisfaction within the organization regarding the status quo of current behaviors or situations. At the same time an increase may occur in the hope, desire, and willingness of the organization to adopt new perspectives, attitudes and behaviors. By consciously developing such a discrepancy, there will develop a motivation towards change (Schein, 1969). When people sense a discrepancy between the outcomes their present behaviors are causing and the desired outcomes they want, this can lead to change.

In doing a comprehensive needs assessment the organization should examine problems, staff needs, organizational goals, political and economic realities. Assessing only one or two parts of the total system may produce inaccurate or invalid data.

Early research also supports the contention that all the existing field of forces should be assessed when determining and predicting change (Lewin, 1939). It is important to note, however, that assessment is most effective when it is solidly data based. Data driven assessment provides a more objective view of the present organizational situation and often produces support for change. Generalized opinion surveys often do not provide sufficient validity for planned change implementation.

A carefully done organizational diagnosis, through interviews, observations and formal surveys, is also useful in developing wide support and involvement among faculty, community and students. Individuals, groups and organizations change when they are involved in the process and feel that they are full participants (Urban and Ford, 1973). A collaborative organizational diagnosis is one way of helping people "buy into", and become involved in, the change process.

Changes imposed by the top of a hierarchy do not assure the cooperation of subordinates. Rather there must be some kind of involvement from below which makes it possible for subordinates to accept and even initiate a certain amount of change themselves. It is the plan of this project to increase the involvement of the people who are closest to the problem. Allow them to promote climate changes that they see as necessary and important for students attending their school.

A word of caution should be mentioned at this point regarding the collaborative relationship between the school faculty and the external program coordinator or change agent. Rather than treating schools as a target for

change, there should be a subtle shift to a service orientation which treats schools and faculties as equal partners. Change tends to be equated with the adoption of threatening innovations. Rather, the change should also provide support to program improvement efforts, and not only the development of new programs. Said another way, schools do appear amendable to improvement - oriented change perceived as consistent with expressed needs and priorities (Emrick and Peterson, 1978).

Diagnostic Instrument

In order to initiate a change process that is data based, a climate assessment instrument is used to provide information and feedback to the program coordinators and to the people in the school organization. This beginning assessment is needed to promote motivation for change and to diagnose the school's current level of functioning and the current level of commitment.

The following general criteria was used for selection of a specific instrument. Basically, the instrument:

. is consistent with school effectiveness literature;

. is relatively simple to understand and score;

. measures a broad range of climate factors on a school wide basis;

. may be completed by a wide range of members of the school community (teachers, students, parents);

. is connected to a pragmatic, action-oriented, change approach.

After classroom climate assessment instruments were screened, three instruments were reviewed for possible use. They included the Organization Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ), the Elementary and Secondary School Index (ESI) and the School District Climate Profile (SDCP).

The Organization Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) is designed to measure faculty perceptions of school climate. It consists of 64 items organized in eight categories: four (disengagement, hindrance, esprit, and intimacy) measure the characteristics of faculty as a group; the other four (aloofness, production emphasis, thrust and consideration) measure the faculty perceptions of the principal as leader.

The OCDQ was not selected for use because it primarily measures morale through faculty perceptions of climate. Its terminology (hindrance, esprit) works against its acceptance by a non-jargon oriented school staff. Finally, although it may describe climate, it is not connected to any action-oriented, change approach.

The Elementary and Secondary School Index (ESI) is one of a number of climate measuring devices developed by Syracuse University. It is designed to check people's perceptions about the impact of the school environment on satisfaction and productivity. It has 61 items which measure intellectual climate, expressiveness, group social life, personal dignity, achievement standards, control and peer group dominance.

The ESI was not selected because it measures only a student's perception of climate and it must be sent to Syracuse University for scoring and expert data interpretation.

The School District Climate Profile (SDCP) (Appendix A) was developed by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation. It was designed to measure satisfaction with current programs and processes in school environments. It also measures the general thrusts towards productivity in schools. Approximately 100 items are designed to obtain school-wide perceptions about the quality of leadership styles, problem-solving and decision making methods, conflict resolution, interpersonal relations, goal setting, organizational communication, administrator and staff preparation, etc; (see Appendix B for a match between school climate determinants and school effectiveness research results). Using a discrepancy scale, the SDCP is useful for promoting change by identifying target areas for climate improvement projects.

The SDCP, although it has been criticized (ERIC, 1978) for conceptual vagueness, e.g., open climates are inherently better than closed climates, and that increases in satisfaction are accompanied by increases in productivity, does meet all of the above stated criteria for instrument selection. It is understandable, school specific, pragmatic and change oriented. It has a wide school community focus and has broad (observational/interview) diagnostic use.

D) Education/Training

As a change strategy, education or re-education refers to activities designed to change and upgrade 1) knowledge and concepts, 2) outmoded beliefs and attitudes and 3) skills. Education may be directed toward improving task achievement, human and social relationships, organizational dynamics and processes and methods of managing and directing change (French and Bell, 1978).

It is the basic assumption of this project that a comprehensive staff development program must focus on organizational goals, rewards, support systems, arrangements of time and space and structures for decision making. Only then can effective school climate improvement take place.

As a result, both the administrative and faculty training programs have a strong organizational base. The learning focuses on concepts of cooperative-problem solving, promoting change, consensus building, action planning and achieving results.

E) Action Planning

Change is more likely to take place when the change process is planned, systematic and coordinated with clear goals (Bandura and Walters, 1963). Change takes place more readily when a change plan is developed and then implemented. This is quite different from the haphazard approach which is not based on clear needs, where things "just happen" because that's the way they've always happened.

Recommended communication for planned change includes various levels of management and subordinate interaction throughout the entire change process. Action research recommends the following steps for collaborative planning:

1. collaborative diagnosis of organizational problems

2. increased skill in interpersonal communication

3. real subordinate participation in setting goals

4. a team approach to developing action plans

5. ongoing individual and team problem solving with superiors (French and Bell, 1978).

Based on the data generated in the school climate diagnosis, the faculty will be brought together for two days of consensus building, prioritizing, problem solving and action planning.

Specific climate improvement projects will be based on the discrepancy data generated by the climate assessment. The climate determinants (see Appendix A) act as guides for implementing specific climate improvement approaches. Using both the creativity of the faculty and the resource network of practices that have proven successful, specific projects are designed and implemented by the school community. The following are examples of organizational interventions that impact on school climate and are linked to program and process determinants found in the SDCP instrument;

- form school governance councils to widen staff, parent and student involvement in decision making and problem solving...delegating to these councils the authority to make decisions regarding policies and procedures;

- expand the opportunities for student, parent and teacher participation in the governance and operation of the school;

- institute a program to encourage administrators, staff, teachers, students to set their own performance goals;

- be certain that the school's norm-belief-value system (school's philosophy) is consistent and well understood;

- cooperatively determine reasonable rules, regulations and procedures. Have them clearly stated, eliminating or rewriting those which cannot be uniformly enforced. Study inconsistencies between school operations and the school's philosophy;

- Widen the circle of reward winners. Every pupil and every staff member should qualify for recognition by the school on a regular basis including rewards for community work outside school. A broad array (including social, civic, practical and academic pursuits) should be recognized as valuable instead of just academic competencies and performances.

- enhance the number and kinds of ways that persons and groups of all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic character are made to feel that they belong and that they have prospects for educational and social success

- start a peer counseling-peer tutoring program;

- implement a teacher-advisor program so that each pupil will have a "friend on the faculty;"

- Introduce projects to include pupils in the evaluation of their own work;

- revise the schools' grading and reporting systems so that all pupils, with reasonable effort, will be able to feel successful;

- interview a group of the school's losers and listen carefully to their description of how school affects their attitudes toward themselves and others. Form a school improvement task force to do something about at least one of the concerns expressed by the losers' group;

- institute a program of Student Team Learning. Students can be important learning resources for one another given appropriately structured tasks and reward systems. Team learning has been shown to raise student's academic achievement while fostering positive peer attitudes and increased self-esteem;

- institute a Mastery Learning Model for the school. Mastery teaching is designed so that every student has a positive and successful learning experience;

- institute a program whereby teachers begin the search for improved teaching techniques. Part of the program would help them identify resources in this area. At the same time teachers would be able to receive specialized training in areas where they would like to improve;

- institute a Schools Without Failure concept where no one gets lost, students achieve and personal responsibility is the cornerstone of the program;

- form school improvement task forces with representatives of the schools sub-groups to open communications among people.

F-G) Implementation/Evaluation

The sixth and seventh steps in the process consist of actively putting in place the practical climate improvement approaches chosen by faculty as being needed in the school setting.

The principal and faculty will jointly monitor the change process and manage the task forces to keep them on target to achieve results. Monitoring the change process and measuring the results tend to support the continuation of the change efforts (French and Bell, 1978).

Too often, goals are set and then forgotten because of the crisis-reactive nature of our school organizations. There is little follow-up. Planning becomes a frustrating exercise. Outcomes are empty promises.

For change to be effective, there must be continual support for the concept and the process. Change efforts should not end with implementation. Rather, a consistent monitoring role is needed to keep the change in motion and people involved. Otherwise, change will probably bog down with a resultant return to the status quo.

Adult learning theory provides additional support for the action research mentioned above. If individuals know there will be a follow-up, they are more likely to reflect on the change and its implications for them. In some cases, it is sufficient for the principal to supervise a change process by simply asking for informal updates. Personal support and interest, along with administrative commitment, must be consistently articulated if change is to continue.

H) Institutionalization

The final state in the climate improvement project concerns the stabilization or maintenance of the change within the organization. Since one of the goals of the project is to help the school develop into a flexible, self-renewing organization, the skills developed during the life of the project must be seen as useful ongoing methods of promoting and managing positive change.

At this stage, the process becomes cyclical and the organization returns, using the summative evaluation data, to the action planning stage - thus perpetuating the process. Specific training to institutionalize some of the change mechanisms and processes will be carried out at this stage.

In addition, once the organization experiences some success in the process, there will be a tendency to internalize or believe in the approach. Every effort will be made to promote immediate and long term success feelings so that the people in the organization feel that what they have done has produced some positive results. This will lead to a stronger internalization and institutionalization of the change.

An excerpt from the Rand study clearly illustrates this point.

> Eventually the enormous time and energy invested in the planned change effort begin to produce results. The benefits may take many forms, including the attainment of the innovation's primary goals, be they increased student learning, better relationships among various racial and socioeconomic groups, or a more efficient school management... There are often other benefits in the form of increased staff morale, enthusiasm, and activity... Sometimes the district receives widespread recognition for its accomplishments, and visitors from other districts pour in to learn "how they did it"... Although it is unlikely that all the problems have been solved and opposition has totally disappeared, the district's atmosphere is charged with the conviction that major problems have been met and that the district has demonstrated its ability to influence its destiny. The district is infused with a "spirit of innovation"--a desire to test new methods combined with a sense of efficiency--that characterizes its management and staff (Pincus and Williams, 1979).

VI SUMMARY

At the time the paper was compiled the school climate project was functioning in two urban schools. Although the project was in operation less than one year, early results were extremely promising. A willingness to make organizational changes was expressed by several levels of employees including teachers, building administrators and central office administrators. The initial work of developing partnerships among the staff, students, parents and administrators was progressing rather well.

An evaluation of the project was not completed at the time this paper was written. Information was gathered during the needs assessment activities on discipline problems, vandalism, attendance and student achievement. Also, the School District Climate Profile instrument was administered to teachers, students, parents and administrators. This information will be used as base line data for the project.

A detailed evaluation of the project will be conducted at the end of the first year. Additional information will be gathered as needed and evaluations conducted. A final evaluation and publication of the results is scheduled at the conclusion of the project in the third year. The school climate improvement model will be published at that time.

APPENDIX A

DETERMINANTS IMPACTING ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

General Climate Factors

1. Respect
2. Trust
3. High Morale
4. Opportunities for Input
5. Continuous Academic and Social Growth
6. Cohesiveness
7. School Renewal
8. Caring

Program Determinants

1. Opportunities for active learning
2. Individualized performance expectations
3. Varied learning environments
4. Flexible curriculum and extracurricular activities
5. Support and structure appropriate to learner's maturity
6. Rules cooperatively determined
7. Varied reward systems

Process Determinants

1. Problem solving ability
2. Improvement of school goals
3. Identifying and working with conflicts
4. Effective communications
5. Involvement in decision making
6. Autonomy with accountability
7. Effective teaching-learning strategies
8. Ability to plan for the future

Material Determinants

1. Adequate resources
2. Supportive and efficient logistical system
3. Suitability of school plant

APPENDIX B

Climate Determinants School District Climate Profile (CFK, Ltd.)	School Effectiveness Research
Opportunities for Active Learning	———
Individualized Performance Expectations	Staff hold decidedly higher and apparently increasing levels of expectations with regard to the educational accomplishments of their students (Rutter, 1979; Brookover and Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds and Fredericksen, 1979).
Varied Learning Environments	Higher levels of access to outside the classroom resources and materials (Madden, 1976)
Flexible Curr. and Extra. Curr. Activities	———
Support and Structure Appropriate to Learner	———
Rules Cooperatively Determined	———
Varied Reward System	Achieving staffs use more reinforcements including rewards and praise (Rutter, 1979; Brookover and Lezotte, 1979).
Problem Solving/Decision Making/ Conflict Resolution	Effective staffs are able to work together to resolve curriculum and problem issues (Rutter, 1979).
Improvement of School Goals/Planning for Future	Improving schools accept and emphasize the importance of goals and objectives for basic reading and math skills (Brookover and Lezotte, 1979).
Effective Communication	———
Autonomy with Accountability	Improving school staffs appear to show a greater degree of acceptance of accountability and are further along in the development of an accountability model (Brookover and Lezotte, 1979). Respect students as responsible individuals (Rutter, 1979).
Effective Teaching-Learning Strategies	Effective schools have a building wide commitment to learning. The staff is "... as anxious to avoid things that don't work as they are committed to implementing things that do". (Edmonds and Fredericksen, 1979).
Adequate Resources	———
Supportive and Efficient Logistical System	Good support services from district administration (Madden, 1976).
Suitability of School Plant	Provision of a pleasant physical environment (Rutter, 1979).

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